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SUBJECT: ANC DEPUTY PRESIDENT TO BE 'DEPLOYED' TO GOVERNMENT

REF: 07 PRETORIA 4242

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Don Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) The ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) decided on 17 March to "deploy" ANC Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe to government in order to smooth the transition from current national President Thabo Mbeki to the next administration, which presumably will be led by new ANC President Jacob Zuma. This public announcement strengthens continuing rumors that Motlanthe would be the ANC's replacement candidate for national President should Jacob Zuma be convicted on pending corruption charges prior to the 2009 parliamentary elections.

¶2. (C) Though Motlanthe's new governmental position will have to be negotiated between Mbeki and the ANC, most media outlets have reported that Motlanthe will most likely be appointed either Deputy President or Minister Without Portfolio. It is widely assumed that many Zuma supporters would take pleasure in seeing current DepPres Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka replaced since she is married to the person many blame for Zuma's current legal problems, former National Director of Public Prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka. However, Jonathan Faull, a political researcher at the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, told PolOff on 18 March that he doubts Motlanthe will end up in the Deputy President position. "It would send the wrong signals -- that Mbeki is a lame duck President in a lame-duck government." He believes Minister Without Portfolio would allow Motlanthe, who has never served outside of party or union structures and thus "does not understand the work of a legislature or executive," to experience a range of government activities.

¶3. (SBU) The Constitution authorizes the President to appoint only two non-Members of Parliament to his/her Cabinet. Currently, these are Sports Minister Makhenkesi Stofile and Science and Technology Minister Mosibudi Mangena. Unless Mbeki replaces one of these two, which is unlikely, the ANC must name Motlanthe to the National Assembly before he can be appointed to a cabinet-level position. However, this should not be difficult since the ANC currently has three vacancies in the National Assembly and party lists for parliamentary seats can be amended once a year in April.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Exactly which position Motlanthe receives will give us greater insight into how much power Mbeki retains as national President in the face of a newly-elected NEC that seems intent on exerting its influence over government. The Constitution gives President Mbeki the executive authority to hire and fire his own cabinet, which

he exercised in June 2005 when he replaced then Deputy President Jacob Zuma with Mlambo-Ngcuka. However, should the NEC succeed in replacing DepPres Mlambo-Ngcuka with Motlanthe, their claims that the only center of power in the ANC rests with the current ANC leadership may be validated.
END COMMENT.
BOST